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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000752

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/PPC, WHA/USOAS, AND WHA/CEN

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SUBJECT: HONDURAN PRIMARIES: LOBO AND ZELAYA'S TICKETS  
EACH WON OVER 100 OUT OF 128 OF CONGRESSIONAL SLOTS

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 411

[B](#). TEGUCIGALPA 410

[C](#). TEGUCIGALPA 393

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Francisco Palmieri;  
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) With vote counting (and re-counting) over, the official results are now final: President of Congress Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo Sosa won the February 20 Nationalist Party primary, beating his chief opponent, Mayor of Tegucigalpa Miguel Pastor 62.3 to 34.9 percent. Liberal Party candidate Mel Zelaya won with 56.3 percent, topping an eight-candidate field. Zelaya's Liberal Party primary drew 900,000 voters, while the participation in the National Party primary was 800,000 voters. As a result, Zelaya out-pollled Lobo 440,000 to 420,000. Overall voter participation in the primaries was 46 percent. Trailing Zelaya in the Liberal Party, Jaime Rosenthal obtained 18.7 percent and Gabriela Nunez 11.7 percent. Puerto Cortes Mayor Marlon Lara exceeded expectations and obtained 5.7 percent, while 2001 nominee Rafael Pineda had 4.3 percent, an extremely poor showing.

Lobo and Zelaya Supporters Dominate Congressional Tickets

[1](#)2. (U) Lobo's supporters won 107 of 128 National Party congressional slots, with Pastor's supporters winning the remaining 21. Zelaya's supporters won 102 of 128 Liberal Party congressional slots, with Rosenthal's supporters winning 13, Nunez's supporters winning six, Pineda's supporters winning three, Lara's supporters winning two, Hugo Noe's supporter's winning one, and Jorge Reina's supporters winning one. A significant percentage of voters voted for the entire ticket of Lobo and Zelaya, with another significant group voting only for some of Lobo/Zelaya's congressional candidates, leaving other slots blank, which helped lead to the overwhelming victory of the leading presidential candidates' slates. That base of support made it very hard for strong individual congressional candidates from losing factions to break through in the primaries. This result ironically complicates efforts to bridge internal divisions in the parties, because losing slates had little to gain by quickly supporting the winning candidate, since few of their supporters will be part of the general election tickets.

As Well as Key Mayoral Races

[1](#)3. (U) In Tegucigalpa, Lobo's mayoral candidate Ricardo Alvarez beat Pastor's candidate Nasry "Tito" Asfura, 58.4 to 39.8 percent. In San Pedro Sula, Lobo's mayoral candidate Arturo "Tuky" Bendana beat Pastor's candidate Oscar Kilgore 49.1 to 37.7 percent, a decisive defeat for the incumbent. On the Liberal side, in Tegucigalpa Zelaya's candidate Enrique "Kike" Ortez Sequeira edged out Rosenthal's candidate Eliseo Castro 39.5 to 33.6 percent. In San Pedro Sula, Zelaya's candidate Rodolfo Padilla Sunceri beat Rosenthal's candidate Harry Panting 34.9 to 22 percent. Once again, the dominant victories of Lobo and Zelaya helped carry their mayoral candidates to victory.

[1](#)4. (SBU) In La Ceiba, Pastor's candidate Ramon Leva beat Lobo's candidate Carmen de Munoz, bucking the national trend. That victory, combined with a strong congressional showing by Pastor supporters in the Atlantida Department (which includes La Ceiba) by winning four of eight slots, including the first three, has established Pastor ally Rodolfo "Fito" Irias Navas, a charter member of the National Party "dark side," as the National Party godfather in Atlantida.

Pollsters Earn an A

[1](#)4. (U) The pre-election polls turned out to be very accurate; they were spot on Zelaya's vote and if anything they understated the eventual margin of victory by Lobo. They were also very accurate on the mayoral races. This bodes well for upcoming polling for the general election.

Irregularities, But No Pattern of Fraud

15. (C) Despite an relatively clean bill of health from the Organization of American States' Election Observation Mission, the count was marred by minor irregularities at specific voting sites and a large number of recounts (25 percent of Liberal Party sites and 15 percent of National Party sites according to the OAS). Catholic Church officials shared with the Embassy that it had received numerous and substantiated reports from its priests and adherents of vote-buying by the Pepe Lobo campaign.

16. (SBU) Comment: The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) took some heat in the post-election period, but performed better than expected given its problems. With the Presidency of the TSE switching from Nationalist Jacobo Hernandez to Liberal

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Aristides Mejia May 17 for a one-year period, there is still much work to be done to prepare for the general elections. Technical assistance funded by the USG, which was critical in the primaries, will be a key factor in ensuring the TSE is able to conduct the general elections (and vote count) successfully. End Comment.

Palmer